25 Jan 72

Harold –

If I don't get this letter off now, when I have a little time, I won't have a chance to do it until Friday, since until then I shall have almost no free time.

Sorry again for having to write in longhand. I am at home now, and my wife is using the typewriter.

Re Lattimer's description of the wrist X-rays (CE 691) as pre-operative. I made a mistake in thinking it post-operative. I now understand the source of my error, which in itself would be worthwhile for you to know.

At p. 524, col. 2, para. 2, Lattimer refers to "the four fragments of bullet seen in the pre-operative roentgenograms." We know from the testimony of Dr. Gregory (4 H 120) that at least 7 or 8 fragments were visible in the pre-operative X-rays and that probably there were more in the wrist that were not visible in X-rays. Specter asks: "How many fragments are there in total..?" Gregory replies: "I would judge from this view that counting each isolated fragment there are fully 7 or 8, and experience has taught that when these things are dismantled directly under direct vision that there very obviously may be more than that." (Elsewhere, I think, Gregory or some other doc explains that one-dimensional X-ray films often don't show all existing fragments, since when the fragments form a line some obscure others or appear to merge with others, so that discreet fragments may appear as one fragment.

A few fragments were left in the wrist after the operation, and these few appear on the post-operative X-rays. When Lattimer referred to a film showing only 4 fragments (and on p. 526 he says 3 in the wrist, one in the thigh), I naturally thought that he must be referring to the post-operative X-rays, since the pre-operative X-rays showed "fully 7 or 8".

p. 525, col. 2, question 2: Question 2 is loaded. At the time when this article was written the vital question did not concern the quantity of the fragments, but their weight. (With the discovery that 399 lost no fragments whatever, the matter of quantity is now relevant, but it was not especially relevant before.)

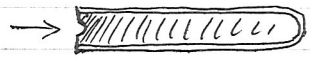
p. 525, caption to Fig. 1: "Only a tiny amount of extruded 'cone' remains, protruding from the base of bullet 399 (arrow, left). The rest had been scraped off..." Take note that we now know that none of the base of 399 had been scraped off (except by Frazier) — for the reasons that I mention in my memo.

same caption: The extrusion of lead from the base of the "test" bullet was not produced by shooting the bullet, but by squeezing it in a vice (see p. 527, col. 1, last para.)

p. 526, col. 1: "experiments described below" — Experiments, my ass. Lattimer squeezed bullets in a vice. Some experiment!

p. 256, col. 1, para. 1 : re "scooped out" — This "scooped out" area can only refer to one of two things, either of which make a fool of Lattimer: (1) the hollow of the base of 399 in its manufactured (i.e. unfired) condition, or (2) the conical crater that Frazier made when he took a sample of lead from the base.

(1) The base of 399-types in unfired condition is concave, like this:



You can tell this from the condition of the feature of the base that I called the "rim" in my memo. The rest of the base is naturally depressed below the level of the "rim".

(2) The conical crater that Frazier produced with a knife-point shows striations, what Lattimer may be referring to as "scratches", indicating that lead was removed from this point. The amount removed from the crater must have been very small — maybe between a half-grain and a grain. The crater is the only area of the base from which any substance was removed, and that occurred after the bullet came into FBI hands.

p. 526, col. 2, para 2 : Notice that the (alleged) quantity of fragments in the wrist has now been reduced from 4 to 3 — Lattimer puts the 4th fragment in the thigh now. Note, too, that Lattimer makes no reference to the fragment deposited on Connally's 5th rib.

p. 527, end of para. 1, col. 1 : Lattimer gives the weights of unfired bullets. The same bullets would weigh a little less than this when fired — say ½ to 1 grain less.

The rest of what Lattimer says is mostly semantic ray-matay referring to hokey "tests" that are worse than meaningless. You can handle these matters as well as I, so I won't mention all the details

Take note of this on p. 529 (bottom): "It should be remembered that bullet 399 is the one which is thought to have hit Pres. Kennedy's neck. It did not hit any bones in Pres. Kennedy and indeed did not hit any vital structures.

(A) The knowledge that there were fragments in JFK's neck is inexplicable in terms of a full metal case bullet that passed through without hitting bone. Lattimer cannot argue that the bullet tumbled in the neck and fragments were brushed off by contact with flesh:

(1) I would think it very unlikely that a 399 could lose fragments merely by contact with flesh,

(2) a tumbling bullet ~~[illegible]~~ moving at high velocity would leave a relatively large and lacerated exit wound (the wound in JFK's front-neck was small and round),

(3) a tumbling bullet would lose energy and velocity at a much faster rate than a non-tumbling bullet. Such loss of velocity & energy would greatly reduce the possibility of excessive travel through Connally, and probably would not cause a neat entrance hole in JBC's back. (Think of a tumbling bullet moving not in gentle tumbles, but much as a buzz-saw moves. It cuts everything in its path and causes excessive laceration.)

Nor can it be asserted that the bullet was yawing in passage through JFK. A yawing bullet is very unstable and would immediately tumble in contact with flesh. (The 5.6 mm round used in the M-16 rifle characteristically yaws for the first hundred yards or so of its travel, so that victims hit within that range usually suffer grossly mutilated wounds caused by the ~~[illegible]~~ yawing bullet that tumbles in the body. After 100 yards the bullet settles into a proper spin, and causes less damage. It begins to yaw again after another couple of hundred yards when it has lost much of its original velocity).

(B) The second part of Lattimer's statement is false. The bullet that penetrated JFK's neck

did hit a vital structure, the trachea, and ruptured it in the right-front quadrant. Without immediate attention, that wound would have been fatal. If he had arrived at the hospital with only the neck wound he might have been saved (although I think the damage behind the trachea was probably much greater than the autopsy docs let on), but to imply that no vital structure was hit is unadulterated stupidity. Wecht would call such a remark "irresponsible"; it is far worse than that.

Here is something really ridiculous. On p. 530 (col. 1 top) Lattimer describes passage of the bullet through JBC: "The passage through the thorax of Gov. Connally with its additional layers of skin and a glancing (tangential) contact with his fifth rib would have slowed it (the bullet-RB) still more, <u>although less than the passage through Pres. Kennedy</u>." Imagine! Passage through JFK's neck, where the bullet met no obstruction but flesh, cause the bullet to lose more energy than passage through JBC's chest, where it not only passed through meat, but struck bone. I give up.

Another beauty at the bottom of col. 1 on p. 538. "... even though the large bone in his wrist had been shattered into many fragments by the <u>tangential passage of the bullet</u>." The bullet did not strike the ~~wrist~~ wrist tangentially; it <u>traversed</u> the wrist — in and out.

Enough for now. Let me know how you chop that bastard Lattimer into hamburger. He has it coming — in spades.

Glad to hear that you did not suffer much pain with your cut thumb. My old injury nearly drove me up the wall at times — in fact it still bothers me, swollen, stiff, and sometimes hurtful. I think back on what happened and it really seems pretty funny.

The motor that gashed me was a 3 hp. Evinrude of superb vintage — manufactured in 1924! It had an exposed flywheel on top, which is the part that done me in. I had only just purchased the beautiful beast (it weighed about 80 lbs!). When I started it up, getting spark by spinning the flywheel manually in the opposite direction, the beast fired right away, but the motor tipped forward so that the propeller moved up out of the water. The flywheel was revolving furiously, so that it did not appear to be revolving. By habit acquired in the use of motors with covered flywheels, I pushed the motor on top so as to set the prop back in the water — on top, that is, of the spinning fly wheel!

It's amazing how you get to know yourself in a situation of extreme crisis. After I got a look at my bleeding and lacerated right hand, can you guess what thought came to my mind, what single overwhelming thought? I had not finished my Ph.D. Thesis at the time. Did I think, "God, I won't be able to write my thesis this summer?" No. Did I think, "Heavens, this is going to crimp my lecturing style, with all its grandiose gestures, and I won't be able to write comments on students essays, and other things that would threaten my job." No. This is the thought that came to my mind: "Christ! There goes my trigger finger. Now I'll have to learn to shoot left handed."

That's how you come to know your system of values. The irony of it is that in the past couple of years I have been shooting very little, although it has nothing to do with the condition of my hand.

I was a long while getting to the hospital for treatment, so the pain eventually got to me. For the first hour or so I felt none. (Nature takes very good care of us, doesn't she?). I took the motor off the boat, hooded it into the car, then put the boat on a rack on top of the car and drove home. It was not until my wife was driving me to the hospital that the thing began to throb with pain. Not unbearable, since I tend to bear physical pain better than most, I think, but painful anyway.

A young lady doc — very young and very lady — took excellent care of me — the scar is hardly evident. The most interesting thing was that she let me watch the whole operation — cutting off loose flesh, sopping up flowing blood, peering down through that great gap between my fingers into the sinews of my hand (I could actually see them), suturing — the whole works. It was fascinating, really. I had always wanted to watch such an operation, but of course did not want it under these circumstances. Ah well, there were, anyway, some salutary things that came out of the mess.

Christ! I must stop and get some preparation done for tomorrow's lectures. Let me know if I can clarify anything about the Lattimer business, and let me know whether you plan

to do anything about it beyond writing for your book. I think something in the form of an article would be good, for it can be got off while the issue is hot. The press is glad to let things cool while things seem to favor the WC version, and they ought not to be allowed to let things stand with Lattimer's fakery.

Jerry sent me copies of the Long John transcripts — I was glad to get them. Lattimer is even more of a fool than I thought. As long as the government wants to set him up, he is the one to go after, for he can be crushed so easily, so easily shown up for the fool that he is.

Some of [redacted] Wecht's comments were superb, as much as anything that I might have expected from a man in his position, and far better, really, than I had expected. I still think that you make a mistake by disparaging what he might do. I think that he needs advisors about aspects of the assassination that he does not understand, but with good advice he can do wonders.

Must stop.

Still,

Dick